

**Department of State**

**Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO): FY 2016 Thematic International Exchange Seminars (TIES) for U.S. Alumni**

**Announcement Type:** New Cooperative Agreement

**Funding Opportunity Number:** ECA-ECAPA-16-001

**Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number:** 19.452

**Key Date/Application Deadline:** May 27, 2016

**Program Description/Executive Summary:**

The Office of Alumni Affairs of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) announces an open competition for the administration of the FY 2016 Thematic International Exchange Seminars (TIES) for U.S. Alumni. U.S. public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3) may submit proposals to conduct four to six regional seminars for American citizens who are alumni of U.S. government-sponsored people-to-people exchange programs. The seminars will focus on thematic topics that support U.S. foreign policy priorities and foster a sense of shared identity, networking, and dialogue among participating alumni. The seminars will be three to four days in duration for 40-60 participants each, and will take place in different cities throughout the United States. ECA anticipates issuing a Cooperative Agreement of up to \$750,000. To support efforts of U.S. alumni to apply their international exchange and seminar experience within their communities or globally, participants will be eligible to compete for a small grants opportunity of up to \$10,000 per project following the seminar, out of approximately \$200,000 allocated within the total award budget.

Applicants may submit only one proposal under this competition. If multiple proposals are received from the same applicant, all submissions will be declared ineligible and receive no further consideration in the review process.

**A. Program Description:**

Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Public Law 87-256, as amended, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act. The purpose of the Act is “to enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries...; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations...and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world.” The funding authority for the program above is provided through legislation.

**Purpose:** In order to enhance the U.S. Department of State’s engagement with American citizens who are alumni of U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs (“exchange alumni”) and support U.S. foreign policy objectives, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs’ (ECA), Office of Alumni Affairs (ECA/P/A), will enter into a cooperative agreement

with an award recipient to conduct the FY 2016 Thematic International Exchange Seminars (TIES) for U.S. Alumni.

**Background:** The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' (ECA) Office of Alumni Affairs (ECA/P/A) leads and coordinates efforts to engage alumni of U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs in order to maintain relationships with these current and emerging leaders. With more than 1,000,000 alumni worldwide, ECA is committed to providing resources to sustain engagement with and tap into the energy, enthusiasm, and expertise of these current and emerging leaders.

ECA/P/A supports alumni programs that are strategic, responsive to U.S. embassy priorities, and designed to reinforce U.S. foreign policy objectives. To best address those objectives, ECA/P/A focuses alumni programs on topics relating to civic engagement, social inclusion, education diplomacy, English language learning, environmental security, entrepreneurship, and good governance.

In addition to providing expertise, training, and support for on-the-ground alumni activities led by U.S. embassies and consulates around the world, ECA/P/A maintains a robust, targeted virtual engagement system. One of the key ways the Office currently unites and engages the alumni community virtually is through the International Exchange Alumni website ([alumni.state.gov](http://alumni.state.gov)), an exclusive, password-protected online global community, which serves as the U.S. Department of State's official website for U.S. government-sponsored exchange alumni. The site offers alumni a place to network and connect with other alumni, share news, and access resources such as grants and research databases.

This model has been highly effective in alumni outreach overseas. However, over one-third of the one million ECA alumni are U.S. citizens, a segment of the alumni population that until recently did not receive a comparable level of targeted programming. In recognition of the size and influence of this group of alumni, ECA/P/A has initiated several programs in the last year aimed at U.S. citizen alumni, including the International Career Building Seminar for U.S. alumni and the Citizen Diplomacy Challenge competition for American alumni.

This cooperative agreement seeks to further expand ECA/P/A's engagement with U.S. alumni by offering post-exchange enrichment seminars for American citizen exchange alumni in different regions of the United States. ECA/P/A previously directly supported one to two seminars a year in various world regions on topics such as youth empowerment and citizen security, gender and women's issues, and volunteerism and community service. Through a current FY 2015 cooperative agreement, ECA/P/A scaled up this program, with plans to offer up to eight seminars over a year and a half in all regions of the world. This cooperative agreement includes a small grants component to help participants take concrete actions as a result of their seminar experiences.

ECA/P/A would like to expand these Alumni Thematic International Exchange Seminars (Alumni TIES), with a FY 2016 cooperative agreement that would focus on strengthening the network of U.S. citizen exchange alumni.

**Goals:** The mission of ECA/P/A is to advance U.S. foreign policy by means of robust alumni programs. Alumni engagement is an integral component of the U.S. Department of State's public diplomacy that generates maximum return on the U.S. government's investment in exchange programs. Through the FY 2016 Thematic International Exchange Seminars (TIES) for U.S. Alumni, ECA/P/A aims to:

1. Strengthen Department of State ties to U.S. citizen alumni, who comprise over 30 percent of the global alumni population. Provide alumni participants with current information about key foreign policy issues and leverage the expertise and enthusiasm of these emerging global leaders to develop innovative solutions to address shared global challenges.
2. Building on the knowledge gained through their exchange experiences, provide U.S. alumni with professional and operational skills, and help them access, create, and sustain networks that advance U.S. competitiveness and leadership in the global economy.
3. Support alumni-driven initiatives that address international issues of common concern and promote mutual understanding between the home communities of alumni and communities around the globe.
4. Reinforce existing alumni program identities and build a sense of common identity among participants of U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs; strengthen alumni voices and agency in support of major public diplomacy and foreign policy priorities.

**Seminars:** "Seminars" are defined as a set of learning, leadership, and networking activities for exchange alumni, focused on one specific U.S. foreign policy priority, including but not limited to possible topics such as climate change, refugees and migration, and economic growth/entrepreneurship. Each seminar will also include an operational, skills-building component, such as project planning, monitoring and evaluation, grants writing, social media tools, etc. in order to foster alumni-driven initiatives that support U.S. foreign policy objectives. During the course of this award, the award recipient will conduct four to six seminars on a range of thematic topics to be identified by ECA in consultation with U.S. Department of State stakeholders, including ECA program and regional bureau public diplomacy offices, and with implementing partners of exchange programs. Once officially approved by the ECA Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, development of a new seminar will commence. Each three to four day seminar will foster networking among exchange alumni from a selected region of the United States, and comprise multiple components, drawing on expert speakers and trainers, group discussions, action-planning, and presentations by the participants. It is possible that multiple seminars will take place concurrently in different regions.

Each seminar will be unique, and will likely necessitate a different program model or design. The size, scope, and timing of each project should be designed with a flexible and collaborative approach in order to maximize program effectiveness and impact in terms of achieving the seminar objectives. In support of a rapid response model, applicants should

demonstrate the ability to implement a seminar within three to four months after being provided the priority topic and region.

**Participants:** “Participants” are defined as U.S. citizen exchange alumni of any U.S. government sponsored exchange program who participate in a regional seminar. ECA/P/A will work with the partner organization, in collaboration with ECA program offices and their implementing partners, to identify potential exchange alumni to invite to apply through a competitive application process. Each seminar will comprise 40-60 participants ranging in age from approximately 18-50. To the extent possible, each seminar will represent the diversity of the United States and include women, minorities, and underserved populations, including individuals with disabilities. Depending on the seminar topic, ECA/P/A may also invite a small number (ten percent or less of the total seminar size) of selected foreign alumni or current exchange program participants to apply to participate.

**Organizational Capacity:** Applicant organizations must demonstrate their capacity for conducting international educational and cultural exchanges, supporting exchange alumni engagement activities that include short-term seminars focused on a range of different subject areas, and providing substantive programming for up-and-coming leaders.

Applicants should illustrate in their proposals the breadth of their experience working in alumni engagement and a record of flexibility and adaptability in programming under short timelines or challenging conditions. Proposals should include concrete examples in which the organization has responded quickly to rapidly evolving circumstances, including, if possible, examples that demonstrate the ability to recruit participants from a diverse and geographically dispersed alumni community.

In addition, applicants must demonstrate the breadth of their experience working with youth and emerging leaders, including support through the development of action plans and small grant opportunities. Applicant organizations must demonstrate the ability to oversee a competitive small grants program as well as transfer and monitor small grants for projects taking place throughout the United States and in countries around the world.

**Language Capacity:** Seminars will be held in English.

**Partner Organizations:** Applicants should provide examples of organizations and individuals with whom they would collaborate, and describe previous cooperative agreement activities. One approach would be for a proposal to choose a hypothetical seminar theme based on a foreign policy priority topic, and spell out a proposed plan for developing the program, with examples of organizations or individuals upon whom the applicant would rely to develop the most appropriate substantive aspects of the program design.

**Small Grants:** To support efforts of U.S. alumni to apply their international exchange and seminar experience within their communities, participants will be eligible to compete for a small grants opportunity of up to \$10,000 per project following the enrichment seminar, out of approximately \$200,000 allocated within the total award budget. Project proposals should

address the priority topic of the regional seminar the alumnus/a participated in, and meet the objectives presented in the participant's action plan, developed at the seminar. To promote collaboration and network building, project proposals involving a minimum of two participating alumni are encouraged. Projects may be carried out in the United States or overseas. Applicant organizations must demonstrate the ability to manage small grants initiatives for exchange alumni, provide resources for alumni to draw on in developing strong proposals, and facilitate a transparent process for selecting competitive proposals that include a panel review with U.S. Department of State representation. Applicants should also demonstrate the ability to responsibly transfer and monitor funds for projects taking place in countries around the world.

**Guidelines:** The cooperative agreement will begin on or about September 1, 2016. The award period will be approximately 18 months in duration, and cover all aspects of program planning, Thematic International Exchange Seminars, and a small grants program for participant alumni. As the award recipient will not know the exact dates of the seminars until a newly approved seminar theme is officially agreed upon with ECA, applicants should propose at least one sample timeline and sample outline for a hypothetical seminar.

Applicants should propose to hold four to six seminars for approximately 40-60 participants each. The seminars will take place in different geographic regions of the United States, including but not limited to the eastern, western, Midwest, and southern regions of the country. The seminars must be completed prior to the anticipated end date of the award, March 1, 2017. Applicants should propose specific seminar dates in their proposals, but the exact timing may be altered through the mutual agreement of the U.S. Department of State and the award recipient, based on the flexible, rapid response approach preferred.

ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal project configurations, budgets, seminars, and participant numbers in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. In addition, ECA reserves the right to adjust the participating countries if conditions change in a partner country or if other countries are identified as priorities for the U.S. Department of State.

**Please note:**

In a cooperative agreement, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. ECA/P/A's activities and responsibilities for the FY 2016 Thematic International Exchange Seminars (TIES) for U.S. Alumni are as follows:

1. Provide advice and assistance in the execution of all program components.
2. Provide clear guidance on the themes, region, and participants that will be the focus of each seminar.
3. Approve internal timeline to achieve each seminar roll-out.
4. Develop selection criteria, and manage the recruitment and selection of the participants in coordination with the recipient organization, ECA program offices, and implementing partners of exchange programs.

5. Facilitate interaction within the U.S. Department of State, to include ECA, implementing partners, and overseas embassies and consulates, as needed.
6. Provide input and final approval of each seminar curricula, including speakers and trainers.
7. Approve promotional materials and final calendar of activities for each seminar.
8. Serve on the selection panel for the small grants program.
9. Approve final list of small grant recipients after each selection panel.
10. Monitor and evaluate the program, through regular communication with the award recipient and routine site visits.
11. Work closely with award recipient and provide feedback following each seminar and periodically throughout the grant to identify areas of improvement.

The responsibilities of the award recipient organization are as follows:

1. Oversee the recruitment and selection process to identify and choose seminar participants, in conjunction with ECA and implementing partners.
2. Develop and execute a communications strategy to provide selected participants with program materials and logistical information prior to each seminar.
3. Manage logistical arrangements and fees, including seminar site selection and contract(s), arranging all technical equipment, staffing, all travel, insurance, ground transportation, accommodations, group meals, and seminar organization for all participants.
4. Develop and implement a plan to monitor the participants' safety and well-being while traveling, and creating opportunities for participants to share potential issues and resolve them promptly.
5. Make proper arrangements for participants' religious observances and dietary needs.
6. Conduct an orientation for the seminars upon participants' arrivals at the host site.
7. Design and plan seminar curriculum and activities to develop the participants' knowledge and skill base for the thematic topic presented.
8. Identify speakers and trainers to assist in the facilitation of each seminar.
9. Develop resources and assist participants in developing action plans and collaborative, innovative project proposals for the small grants program.
10. Facilitate a small grants program for participating exchange alumni, including the creation of supporting resources and overseeing a selection panel.
11. Oversee the responsible transfer and monitoring of funds to selected alumni for projects that take place in the United States and countries around the world.
12. Establish a reporting plan for recipients of the small grants program, and regularly update ECA with the results of alumni projects on an agreed-upon basis.
13. Facilitate, in coordination with ECA, continued engagement among the participants and offering opportunities to reinforce the ideas, values, and skills imparted during their exchange and seminar experience.
14. Collaborate with ECA to design and implement an evaluation plan that assesses the short- and medium-term impact of the seminars on the participants.

**Additional Information:**

The award recipient will utilize the name “Thematic International Exchange Seminars (TIES) for U.S. Alumni” to identify their project. All materials, publicity, and correspondence related to the program will acknowledge this as a program of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State. The Bureau will retain copyright use of and be allowed to distribute materials related to this program as it sees fit.

### What to Include in Your Proposal

Executive Summary. The Executive Summary should be one page in length and include: program title, goals of the program, names of potential partner organizations responsible for project implementation, proposed numbers of participants, and a general outline of the seminars.\_

Proposal Narrative. In no more than 20 double-spaced pages the narrative should include:

*Project Goals, Objectives, Anticipated Outcomes.* A clear, succinct statement of seminar goals, objectives, and anticipated outcomes that expand upon program goals as stated in this NOFO. Objectives should be described in specific, measurable, and realistic terms that are achievable within the scope of the program, both in terms of time and funding. They should be framed from the participant perspective, i.e., “By (time), the participants will...”

Proposals that clearly delineate salient objectives in measurable terms and plan activities in a sequence that progressively leads to achieving those objectives will be considered more competitive.

*Project Management Plan.* A simple project management plan for the life of the program that lists, in table format, proposed outputs (major events or tasks performed by the grantee organization or partners), dates, and the person or group responsible.

*Background Information on Implementing Organizations.* Information on proposed organizations and staff involved in the implementation of the project including the mission and relevant expertise in conducting programs of a related nature, including ongoing and planned activities not including the proposed project. If the applicant has received awards from ECA in the past, please list examples of relevant projects by office (Citizen Exchanges, International Visitors, Academic Exchanges, etc.), including project name, countries, year, and amount.

*Roles and Responsibilities.* A clear delineation of proposed roles and responsibilities for the potential award recipient and subaward recipient(s) in terms of project logistics, management, resources, and oversight.

*Support of Diversity.* A description on how the Bureau’s policy on Support of Diversity will be integrated into all aspects of the seminar, including but not limited to program materials and training methodology. Please refer to guidance in PSI under “Diversity, Freedom and Democracy Guidelines.”

*Promotion of Post-Seminar Engagement.* Proposals should include concrete plans for developing innovative and sustainable enhancement activities that reinforce project goals after the participants return home from a seminar. This should include the creation of resources to support individual action plans, and the creation, administration, and oversight of a small grants program. Proposals should clearly articulate how the award recipient will provide ECA with regular updates on alumni projects as well as professional successes resulting from their participation in the Thematic International Exchange Seminars.

*Evaluation Plan.* The evaluation plan should measure the impact of the program in four ways: (1) Assessment by participants of the conduct of the program, including accommodations, orientation, activities, transportation, meals, etc.; (2) measurement of the increase in knowledge or skills attributable to the program; (3) measurement of the participant's change in behavior; (4) measurement of the changes in behavior of organizations or groups with which the participant is associated. Please refer to section D.3j. "Program Monitoring and Evaluation" for further guidance. Detailed evaluation plans that put the narrative over the 20-page limit and sample surveys or other evaluation tools may be included as an attachment.

*Budget.* Please refer to section D.3o. in this document for allowable costs and the PSI for guidance on formatting your budget.

*Acknowledging ECA's Financial Support.* An acknowledgment to follow guidance in the PSI entitled "Acknowledgment of ECA's Financial Support and Use of the Department Seal." Proposals should also indicate agreement to use the "International Exchange Alumni" logo in all relevant program materials, applications, websites, and other related materials.

*Resumes.* Resumes of principal staff of all partner organizations involved in the implementation of the project should be included. Resumes should be no more than two pages long.

*Letters of Commitment and/or Letters of Support.* Letters of commitment or support from partner organizations/partner institutions should demonstrate a capacity to arrange and conduct U.S. and overseas activities should also be included.

*Project Materials.* Materials that help demonstrate seminar design and implementation should be included. These include:

1. Sample calendar outline
2. Sample seminar agenda
3. Draft materials to support the alumni small grants program
4. Sample evaluation and survey instruments
5. List of potential partners
6. Project management plan
7. Sample social media plan
7. Draft promotional materials



*Unsolicited Documents.* Attachments that do not directly address the proposed project (i.e., organization brochures, pamphlets, unsolicited reports) are strongly discouraged.

## **Program Narrative**

### **Executive Summary**

The Executive Summary should be one double-spaced page in length and include:

1. Name of organization/participating institutions
2. Beginning and ending dates of the program
3. The project title
4. The goals of the project
5. The names of all partner organizations responsible for project implementation
6. The numbers of participants
7. The wider audience benefiting from program (overall impact)
8. The number of proposed seminars and approximate dates and placement sites in the United States
9. The number of days fellows will spend at the seminars excluding travel days

### **Narrative**

In 20 double-spaced, single-sided pages, provide a detailed description of the project addressing the areas listed below:

- **Project Goals, Objectives, Anticipated Outcomes**  
Proposals should include a clear, succinct statement of project goals, objectives, and anticipated outcomes that expand upon the FY 2016 Thematic International Exchange Seminar goals as stated in Section A. of this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). Objectives should be described in specific, measurable, and realistic terms that are achievable within the scope of the project, both in terms of time and funding.
- **Background Information on the applicant organization and all partner organizations**  
For each organization, its mission, date of establishment, relevant expertise, past programmatic work, and ongoing programmatic work should be described. Previous awards from the Bureau, including both grants and cooperative agreements, should be listed by office (Citizen Exchanges, International Visitors, Academic Exchanges, etc.), project name, countries, year, and amount. Proposals should describe previous collaboration with proposed partner organizations, as well as clearly delineate a division of responsibilities between all organizations that will be involved in the project.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation Plan**  
Proposals should describe in detail the applicant organization's proposed approach for monitoring and evaluation. For further guidance, please see Section D.3j. "Program Monitoring and Evaluation." Detailed evaluation plans that put the narrative over the 20-page limit and sample evaluation surveys or other evaluation tools may be included as an attachment.

## **Detailed Budget**

For more budget information including specific allowable costs, refer to both Section D.3o., as well as the PSI. Proposals should describe how the award recipient will conduct budget oversight as it relates to project management. In addition, proposals must include a detailed budget narrative.

**Additional Information to be Submitted – Attachments:**

- The items below should be included as attachments. Please label each attachment in a clear and concise manner (i.e. Program Management Plan; Letters of Support, etc.).
- A Project Management Plan for the entire life of the project that lists, in table format, outputs (major tasks that will be implemented by the award recipient and partner organizations), dates, and the organization/staff responsible;
  - Letters of commitment and/or letters of support from: 1) proposed partner organizations; 2) proposed or past fellowship placement organizations; and 3) preferably, from past exchange program participants;
  - Resumes (no more than two pages in length) of proposed key staff at the applicant organization and all partner organizations that will be involved in the implementation of the project; and
  - Draft program implementation materials.

**B. Federal Award Information:**

**Type of Award:** Cooperative Agreement. ECA's level of involvement in this program is listed under A. Program Description.

**Fiscal Year Funds:** FY 2016

**Approximate Total Funding:** \$750,000

**Approximate Number of Awards:** One

**Approximate Average Award:** \$750,000

**Floor of Award Range:** None

**Ceiling of Award Range:** \$750,000

**Anticipated Award Date:** Pending the availability of funds, September 1, 2016

**Anticipated Project Completion Date:** March 1, 2017

**C. Eligibility Information:**

**C.1. Eligible applicants:** Applications may be submitted by U.S. public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3).

**C.2. Cost Sharing or Matching Funds:** There is no minimum or maximum percentage required for this competition. However, the Bureau encourages applicants to provide maximum levels of cost sharing and funding in support of its programs.

When cost sharing is offered, it is understood and agreed that the applicant must provide the amount of cost sharing as stipulated in its proposal and later included in an approved

agreement. Cost sharing may be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs. For accountability, you must maintain written records to support all costs which are claimed as your contribution, as well as costs to be paid by the Federal government. Such records are subject to audit. The basis for determining the value of cash and in-kind contributions must be in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's Circular 2 CFR Parts 200 and 600, entitled the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards. In the event you do not provide the minimum amount of cost sharing as stipulated in the approved budget, ECA's contribution will be reduced in like proportion.

### **C.3. Other Eligibility Requirements:**

a.) Bureau grant guidelines require that organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges be limited to \$130,000 in Bureau funding. ECA anticipates making one award, in an amount (\$750,000) to support program and administrative costs required to implement this exchange program. Therefore, organizations with less than four years experience in conducting international exchanges are ineligible to apply under this competition.

b.) Technical Eligibility: All proposals must comply with the following: (list requirements) or they will result in your proposal being declared technically ineligible and given no further consideration in the review process.

- Eligible applicants may not submit more than one proposal in this competition. If more than one proposal is received from the same applicant, all submissions will be declared technically ineligible and will receive no further consideration in the review process. **Please note:** Applicant organizations are defined by their legal name, and EIN number as stated on their completed SF-424 and additional supporting documentation outlined in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document.

### **D.) Application and Submission Information:**

Note: Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the NOFO deadline has passed, Bureau staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

#### **D.1 Contact Information to Request an Application Package:**

Please contact Carrie Lee in the Office of Alumni Affairs (ECA/P/A), SA-5, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, 202-632-6185 or email LeeCK2@state.gov to request a Solicitation Package.

The Solicitation Package contains the Proposal Submission Instruction (PSI) document which consists of required application forms, and standard guidelines for proposal preparation.

Please specify Carrie Lee and refer to the Funding Opportunity Number located at the top of this announcement on all other inquiries and correspondence.

**D.2. To Download a Solicitation Package Via Internet:**

The entire Solicitation Package may be downloaded from the Bureau's website at <http://eca.state.gov/organizational-funding> or from the Grants.gov website at <http://www.grants.gov>.

Please read all information before downloading.

**D.2a. Content and Form of Submission:** Applicants must follow all instructions in the Solicitation Package. The application should be submitted per the instructions under D.3p. "Application Deadline and Method of Submission" section below.

**D.3a.** You are required to have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number to apply for a grant or cooperative agreement from the U.S. Government. This number is a nine-digit identification number, which uniquely identifies business entities. Obtaining a UEI number is easy and there is no charge. To obtain a UEI number, access <http://www.dnb.com> or call 1-866-705-5711. Please ensure that your UEI (DUNS) number is included in the appropriate box of the SF – 424 which is part of the formal application package.

**D.3b.** All proposals must contain an executive summary, proposal narrative and budget.

Please Refer to the Solicitation Package. It contains the mandatory Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document for additional formatting and technical requirements.

**D.3c.** All federal award applicants must be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) database in order to submit a proposal in response to an open competition on Grants.gov.

All federal award recipients must maintain current registrations in the SAM database. Recipients must maintain accurate and up-to-date information in [www.SAM.gov](http://www.SAM.gov) until all program and financial activity and reporting have been completed. Recipients must review and update the information at least annually after the initial registration and more frequently if required information changes or another award is granted. Failure to register in SAM will render applicants ineligible to receive funding.

**D.3d.** You must have nonprofit status with the IRS at the time of application. **Please note:** Effective January 7, 2009, all applicants for ECA federal assistance awards must include in their application the names of directors and/or senior executives (current officers, trustees, and key employees, regardless of amount of compensation). In fulfilling this requirement, applicants must submit information in one of the following ways:

- 1) Those who file Internal Revenue Service Form 990, "Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax," must include a copy of relevant portions of this form.
- 2) Those who do not file IRS Form 990 must submit information above in the format of their choice.

D.3e. In addition to final program reporting requirements, award recipients will also be required to submit a one-page document, derived from their program reports, listing and describing their grant activities. For award recipients, the names of directors and/or senior executives (current officers, trustees, and key employees), as well as the one- page description of grant activities, will be transmitted by the State Department to OMB, along with other information required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), and will be made available to the public by the Office of Management and Budget on its USASpending.gov website as part of ECA's FFATA reporting requirements.

D.3f. If your organization is a private nonprofit which has not received a grant or cooperative agreement from ECA in the past three years, or if your organization received nonprofit status from the IRS within the past four years, you must submit the necessary documentation to verify nonprofit status as directed in the PSI document. Failure to do so will cause your proposal to be declared technically ineligible.

D.3g. **All ECA awards recipient organizations** must be registered with GrantSolutions by accessing [www.GrantSolutions.gov](http://www.GrantSolutions.gov). To register as a first time user of GrantSolutions, please scroll to the bottom of the home page and click "Getting Started-Request a User Account" at <http://home.grantsolutions.gov/home/home/customer-support/getting-started/>. Organizations that have previously used GrantSolutions do not need to register again. If the organization is not able to access the system, please contact GrantSolutions.gov Help Desk for help in gaining access.

Support for Grantee Organizations is available from 8 AM – 6 PM EST, Monday – Friday and can be reached at [help@grantsolutions.gov](mailto:help@grantsolutions.gov) or 1-866-577-0771.

Please take into consideration the following information when preparing your proposal narrative:

#### **FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY:**

#### **D.3h. ADHERENCE TO ALL REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE J VISA**

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs places critically important emphases on the security and proper administration of the Exchange Visitor (J visa) Programs and adherence by award recipients and sponsors to all regulations governing the J visa. A copy of the complete regulations governing the administration of Exchange Visitor (J) programs is available at <http://j1visa.state.gov> or from:

Office of Designation, Private Sector Programs Division  
U.S. Department of State  
SA-44, Suite 668  
301 4<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20547

Please refer to Solicitation Package for further information.

#### **D.3i. Diversity, Freedom and Democracy Guidelines**

Pursuant to the Bureau's authorizing legislation, programs must maintain a non-political character and should be balanced and representative of the diversity of political, social and cultural life in the United States and abroad. "Diversity" should be interpreted in the broadest sense and encompass differences including race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, geographic location, socio-economic status, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity. Proposals should demonstrate how diversity will enhance the program's goals and objectives and the participants' exchange experience. Please refer to the review criteria under the 'Support of Diversity' section of this document as well as the DIVERSITY, FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY section in the "Proposal Submission Instructions" document for specific suggestions on incorporating diversity into the total proposal.

Public Law 104-319 provides that "in carrying out programs of educational and cultural exchange in countries whose people do not fully enjoy freedom and democracy," the Bureau "shall take appropriate steps to provide opportunities for participation in such programs to human rights and democracy leaders of such countries." Public Law 106 - 113 requires that the governments of the countries described above do not have inappropriate influence in the selection process. Proposals should reflect advancement of these goals in their program contents, to the full extent deemed feasible.

#### **D.3j. Program Monitoring and Evaluation**

Proposals must include a plan to monitor and evaluate the project's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. The Bureau recommends that your proposal include a draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus a description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives. The Bureau expects that the recipient organization will track participants or partners and be able to respond to key evaluation questions, including satisfaction with the program, learning as a result of the program, changes in behavior as a result of the program, and effects of the program on institutions (institutions in which participants work or partner institutions). The evaluation plan should include indicators that measure gains in mutual understanding as well as substantive knowledge.

Successful monitoring and evaluation depend heavily on setting clear goals and outcomes at the outset of a program. Your evaluation plan should include a description of your project's

objectives, your anticipated project outcomes, and how and when you intend to measure these outcomes (performance indicators). The more that outcomes are "smart" (specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and placed in a reasonable time frame), the easier it will be to conduct the evaluation. You should also show how your project objectives link to the goals of the program described in this NOFO.

Your monitoring and evaluation plan should clearly distinguish between program outputs and outcomes. Outputs are products and services delivered, often stated as an amount. Output information is important to show the scope or size of project activities, but it cannot substitute for information about progress towards outcomes or the results achieved. Examples of outputs include the number of people trained or the number of seminars conducted. Outcomes, in contrast, represent specific results a project is intended to achieve and is usually measured as an extent of change. Findings on outputs and outcomes should both be reported, but the focus should be on outcomes.

We encourage you to assess the following four levels of outcomes, as they relate to the program goals set out in the NOFO (listed here in increasing order of importance):

1. **Participant satisfaction** with the program and exchange experience.
2. **Participant learning**, such as increased knowledge, aptitude, skills, and changed understanding and attitude. Learning includes both substantive (subject-specific) learning and mutual understanding.
3. **Participant behavior**, concrete actions to apply knowledge in work or community; greater participation and responsibility in civic organizations; interpretation and explanation of experiences and new knowledge gained; continued contacts between participants, community members, and others.
4. **Institutional changes**, such as increased collaboration and partnerships, policy reforms, new programming, and organizational improvements.

**Please note:** Consideration should be given to the appropriate timing of data collection for each level of outcome. For example, satisfaction is usually captured as a short-term outcome, whereas behavior and institutional changes are normally considered longer-term outcomes.

Overall, the quality of your monitoring and evaluation plan will be judged on how well it 1) specifies intended outcomes; 2) gives clear descriptions of how each outcome will be measured; 3) identifies when particular outcomes will be measured; and 4) provides a clear description of the data collection strategies for each outcome (i.e., surveys, interviews, or focus groups). (Please note that evaluation plans that deal only with the first level of outcomes [satisfaction] will be deemed less competitive under the present evaluation criteria.)

Recipient organizations will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to the Bureau in their regular program reports. All data collected, including survey

responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and provided to the Bureau upon request.

**D.3k. Virtual Exchange Component:** ECA welcomes innovative ideas on how organizations can leverage appropriate mobile and/or online technologies to maintain engagement among exchange participants, encourage project collaboration and widen participation in the overall project to a broader audience. ECA strongly encourages organizations submitting proposals in response to this solicitation to suggest one or more virtual exchange components to complement the in-person exchange. The virtual exchange component(s) could come before, during and/or after the physical exchange. The objective for the virtual exchange component(s), defined as technology-enabled, sustainable, people-to-people, cross-cultural exchanges, is to augment the impact of the in-person exchange described in this solicitation. ECA encourages organizations to propose virtual exchange ideas that take advantage of ECA's existing web and social networking platforms, including our International Exchange Alumni space. Virtual exchange components would be coordinated with and approved by the ECA program office and U.S. missions abroad on a project by project basis.

**D.3l. Communications Guidance for ECA Grant Recipients:** All ECA Grant Recipients must adhere to the requirements in ECA's Communications Guidance on the creation of program branding and attribution, websites, social media, and press.

**D.3m.** Please take the following information into consideration when preparing your budget:

**D.3n.** Applicants must submit SF-424A – “Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs” along with a comprehensive budget for the entire program. There must be a summary budget as well as breakdowns reflecting both administrative and program budgets. Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification.

**D.3o.** Allowable costs for the program include the following:

1. Travel. International (if needed) and domestic airfare; airline baggage and seat fees; visas (if needed); transit costs; ground transportation costs. Please note that all air travel must be in compliance with the Fly America Act.
2. Per Diem. Organizations should use the published federal per diem rates for individual U.S. cities. Domestic per diem rates may be accessed at: <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/21287>. ECA requests applicants to budget realistic costs that reflect the local economy and do not exceed federal per diem rates.
3. Consultants. Consultants (i.e. trainers, speakers, etc.) may be used to provide specialized expertise or to make presentations. Honoraria rates should not exceed \$250 per day per session. Organizations are encouraged to cost-share rates that would exceed that



figure. Subcontracting organizations may also be employed, in which case the written agreement between the prospective grantee and sub-grantee should be included in the proposal. Such sub-awards should detail the division of responsibilities and proposed costs, and subcontracts should be itemized in the budget.

4. Room Rental. The rental of meeting space should not exceed \$250 per day per activity. Any rates that exceed this amount should be cost shared.
5. Materials. Proposals may contain costs to purchase and develop materials for fellows. Costs for high quality translation of materials should be anticipated and included in the budget, if needed.
6. Working Meal. One working meal may be provided during U.S.-based components. Per capita costs for working meals may not exceed \$45/person, excluding room rental and other overhead charges. The number of invited guests may not exceed seminar participants by more than a factor of two-to-one.
7. Wire Transfer Fees. When necessary, applicants may include costs to transfer funds to foreign-based partner organizations. The award recipient is urged to research applicable taxes that may be imposed on these transfers by host governments.
8. Travel Costs for Visa Processing Purposes. Visas for participants to travel may be necessary, and applicants should plan to cover these costs. Applicants should also include costs for any travel associated with procuring visas, including travel for interviews, delivering or picking up passports, etc.
9. Administrative Costs. Costs necessary for the effective administration of the project may include salaries for employees, benefits, and other direct and indirect costs per detailed instructions in the PSI. Proposals should show strong administrative cost sharing contributions from the applicant, the in-country partner and other sources. Award recipient staff travel should NOT be included in the exchange participant numbers.
10. Reasonable Accommodations. Organizations should budget for the reasonable accommodation of participating individuals with disabilities. Proposals may allocate up to 5-7% of the total requested ECA award funds for this purpose.
11. Post-Seminar Engagement and Alumni Small Grants Program. Reasonable costs related to post-seminar engagement and alumni activities may be included. The proposal must include an outline of any proposed post-seminar engagement and alumni activities, including the facilitation of the Alumni Small Grants Program. Proposals should also demonstrate how the award recipient organization will creatively utilize technology and online networking sites to enhance and amplify alumni programming.

Please refer to the Solicitation Package for complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions.

**D.3p. Application Deadline and Method of Submission:**

Application Deadline Date: Friday, May 27, 2016

Method of Submission: Applications may only be submitted electronically through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>). Complete solicitation packages are available at Grants.gov in the “Find” portion of the system.

**PLEASE NOTE:** ECA bears no responsibility for applicant timeliness of submission or data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes for proposals submitted via Grants.gov.

Please follow the instructions available in the ‘Get Started’ portion of the site (<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>).

Several of the steps in the Grants.gov registration process could take several weeks. Therefore, applicants should check with appropriate staff within their organizations immediately after reviewing this NOFO to confirm or determine their registration status with Grants.gov.

Once registered, the amount of time it can take to upload an application will vary depending on a variety of factors including the size of the application and the speed of your internet connection. In addition, validation of an electronic submission via Grants.gov can take up to two business days.

Therefore, we strongly recommend that you not wait until the application deadline to begin the submission process through Grants.gov.

The Grants.gov website includes extensive information on all phases/aspects of the Grants.gov process, including an extensive section on frequently asked questions, located under the "For Applicants" section of the website. ECA strongly recommends that all potential applicants review thoroughly the Grants.gov website, well in advance of submitting a proposal through the Grants.gov system.

Direct all questions regarding Grants.gov registration and submission to:

Grants.gov Customer Support

Contact Center Phone: 800 -518-4726

Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; closed on federal holidays

Email: [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov)

Applicants have until midnight (12:00 a.m.), Washington, DC time of the closing date to ensure that their entire application has been uploaded to the Grants.gov site. There are no exceptions to the above deadline. Applications uploaded to the site after midnight of the application deadline date will be automatically rejected by the Grants.gov system, and will be technically ineligible.

Please refer to the Grants.gov website, for definitions of various "application statuses" and the difference between a submission receipt and a submission validation. Applicants will receive a validation e-mail from Grants.gov upon the successful submission of an application. Again, validation of an electronic submission via Grants.gov can take up to two business days. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you not wait until the application deadline to begin the submission process through Grants.gov. ECA will not notify you upon receipt of electronic applications.

**It is the responsibility of all applicants submitting proposals via the Grants.gov web portal to ensure that proposals have been received by Grants.gov in their entirety, and ECA bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes.**

D.3q. Intergovernmental Review of Applications: Executive Order 12372 does not apply to this program.

## **E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION**

The Bureau will review all proposals for technical eligibility. Proposals will be deemed ineligible if they do not fully adhere to the guidelines stated herein and in the Solicitation Package. All eligible proposals will be reviewed by the program office, as well as the Public Diplomacy section overseas and State Department regional bureaus, where appropriate. Eligible proposals will be subject to compliance with Federal and Bureau regulations and guidelines and forwarded to Bureau grant panels for advisory review. Proposals may also be reviewed by the Office of the Legal Adviser or by other Department elements. All awards will be assessed for risk prior to their issuance. Final funding decisions are at the discretion of the Department of State's Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Final technical authority for assistance awards resides with the Bureau's Grants Officer.

### **E.1. REVIEW CRITERIA**

Technically eligible applications will be competitively reviewed according to the criteria stated below. These criteria are not rank ordered and all carry equal weight in the proposal evaluation:

- 1. Quality of the program idea:** Proposals should exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to the Bureau's mission.
- 2. Program planning:** Detailed agenda and relevant work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and logistical capacity. The agenda and plan should adhere to the program overview and guidelines described above.

**3. Ability to achieve program objectives:** Objectives should be reasonable, feasible, and flexible. Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the institution will meet the program's objectives and plan.

**4. Multiplier effect/impact:** Proposed programs should strengthen long-term mutual understanding, including maximum sharing of information and establishment of long-term institutional and individual linkages.

**5. Support of Diversity:** Proposals should show substantive support of the Bureau's policy on diversity. Proposals should demonstrate how diversity will be achieved in the different aspects of program administration and of program design, content and implementation, including individual grantee/participant recruitment, selection and placement. It is important that proposals have a clearly articulated diversity plan and not simply express general support for the concept of diversity.

**6. Institutional Capacity:** Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program or project's goals.

**7. Institution's Record/Ability:** Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past Bureau awards (grants or cooperative agreements) as determined by Bureau Grants Staff. The Bureau will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.

**8. Follow-on Activities:** Proposals should provide a plan for continued follow-on activity (without Bureau support) ensuring that Bureau supported programs are not isolated events.

**9. Project Evaluation:** Proposals should include a plan to evaluate the activity's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. The Bureau recommends that the proposal include a draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives. The award recipient will be expected to submit intermediate reports after each project component is concluded or quarterly, whichever is less frequent.

**10. Cost-effectiveness:** The overhead and administrative components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. All other items should be necessary and appropriate.

**11. Cost-sharing:** Proposals should maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions.

## **F.) Federal Award Administration Information**

### **F.1. Award Notices:**

Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal Bureau procedures. Successful applicants will receive a Federal Assistance Award (FAA) from the Bureau's Grants Office. The FAA and the original proposal with subsequent modifications (if applicable) shall be the only binding authorizing document between the recipient and the U.S. Government. The FAA will be signed by an authorized Grants Officer, and transmitted to the recipient's responsible officer identified in the application.

Unsuccessful applicants will receive notification of the results of the application review from the ECA program office coordinating this competition.

**Prohibition on the use of Federal Funds to Promote, Support, or advocate for the legalization or practice of Prostitution.**

The U.S. Government is opposed to prostitution and related activities, which are inherently harmful and dehumanizing, and contribute to the phenomenon of trafficking in persons. None of the funds made available under this agreement may be used to promote, support, or advocate the legalization or practice of prostitution. Nothing in the preceding sentence shall be construed to preclude assistance designed to ameliorate the suffering of, or health risks to, victims while they are being trafficked or after they are out of the situation that resulted from such victims being trafficked.

The recipient shall insert the foregoing provision in all sub-agreements under this award.

This provision includes express terms and conditions of the agreement and any violation of it shall be grounds for unilateral termination of the agreement by the Department of State prior to the end of its term.

**F.2 Administrative and National Policy Requirements:**

Terms and Conditions for the Administration of ECA agreements include the following: Office of Management and Budget's Circular 2 CFR Parts 200 and 600, entitled the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Effective December 26, 2014, replacing the previous circulars).

For a copy of the OMB circular cited, please contact the U.S. Government Publishing Office or download from the [www.ecfr.gov](http://www.ecfr.gov) website.

Please reference the following websites for additional information:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants>

<https://www.statebuy.state.gov/fa/pages/home.aspx>

**F.3. Reporting Requirements:** You must provide ECA with an electronic copy of the following required reports:

*Mandatory:*

- 1.) Additional performance reports shall not be required more frequently than quarterly or, less frequently than annually. Annual reports shall be due 90 calendar days after the grant year; quarterly or semi-annual reports shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. (Frequency of these reports will be determined by the Grants Officer and Program Officer). A SF-PPR, "Performance Progress Report" Cover Sheet must be submitted with all programmatic reports and can be found here: [http://aopefa.a.state.gov/content.asp?content\\_id=20&menu\\_id=68](http://aopefa.a.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=20&menu_id=68). The complete

report and supporting documentation must be uploaded by the Recipient as a *Grant Note* under the corresponding record for this Agreement in GrantSolutions.gov. For assistance, please contact the GrantSolutions Help Desk at 1 (866) 577-0771 (toll free for US callers) or by email at [help@grantsolutions.gov](mailto:help@grantsolutions.gov). The Federal Financial Report (FFR SF-425/SF-425a) must be submitted through the Payment Management System (PMS). The electronic version of the FFR can be accessed at: <http://www.dpm.psc.gov/>. Once a financial report has been approved by the Department, the Recipient must upload the approved report to [GrantSolutions.gov](http://grantsolutions.gov), in the same manner specified for the programmatic reports. Failure to comply with these reporting requirements may jeopardize the Recipient's eligibility for future Agreements.

- 2.) A final program and financial report no more than 90 days after the expiration or termination of the award;
- 3.) A concise, one-page final program report summarizing program outcomes no more than 90 days after the expiration of the award. This report should be e-mailed to: [FFATAECA@state.gov](mailto:FFATAECA@state.gov). This one-page report will be transmitted to OMB, and be made available to the public via OMB's USAspending.gov website - as part of ECA's Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) reporting requirements.

Award recipients will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to the Bureau in their regular program reports. (Please refer to D.3j. Program Monitoring and Evaluation information.)

All data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and provided to the Bureau upon request.

#### F.4. Program Data Requirements:

Award recipients will be required to maintain specific data on program participants and activities in an electronically accessible database format that can be shared with the Bureau as required. At a minimum, the data must include the following:

- 1) Name, address, contact information and biographic sketch of all persons who travel internationally on funds provided by the agreement or who benefit from the award funding but do not travel.
- 2) Itineraries of international and domestic travel, providing dates of travel and cities in which any exchange experiences take place. Final schedules for in-country and U.S. activities must be received by the ECA Program Officer at least three work days prior to the official opening of the activity.

#### G. Agency Contacts

For questions about this announcement, contact: Carrie Lee, U.S. Department of State, Office of Alumni Affairs (ECA/P/A), SA-5, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037, 202-632-6185 or email [LeeCK2@state.gov](mailto:LeeCK2@state.gov).

All correspondence with the Bureau concerning this NOFO should reference the title and funding opportunity number listed at the top of this solicitation.

Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the NOFO deadline has passed, Bureau staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

**H. Other Information:****Notice:**

The terms and conditions published in this NOFO are binding and may not be modified by any Bureau representative. Explanatory information provided by the Bureau that contradicts published language will not be binding. Issuance of the NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government. The Bureau reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. Awards made will be subject to periodic reporting and evaluation requirements per section F3. Reporting Requirements above.

Evan Ryan  
Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs  
U.S. Department of State

March 23, 2016



